Amendments to the Claims

Claim 1 (previously presented): A method of enhancing a voice mail message for playback to a
listener, comprising steps of:

    creating the voice mail message for the listener, by a caller using a telephone device, the
voice mail message comprising a plurality of message segments;

    identifying, by the caller using the telephone device, at least two of the message segments
which are to have background sounds associated therewith;

    selecting, for each of the identified message segments by the caller using the telephone
device, a sound to be associated therewith as the background sound, wherein the sounds selected
as the background sound for at least two of the message segments are different sounds; and

    responsive to a request from the listener for playback of the voice mail message, playing
back at least two of the identified message segments for which a sound was selected to be
associated therewith as the background sound, while concurrently playing back the sound selected
as the background sound for each of the played-backed identified message segments, and wherein
the sounds selected as the background sound for at least two of the played-back identified
message segments are different sounds, such that the background sound played back for the voice
mail message changes at least once during the playback.

Claims 2 - 8 (canceled)

Claim 9 (previously presented): The method according to Claim 1, wherein the selecting step
further comprises entering, by the caller using the telephone device, a caller-specific personal

3   identification value, and wherein the entering of the caller-specific personal identification value

4   causes the sounds to be associated with the identified message segments to be automatically

5   selected, without intervention by the caller.

Claim 10 (canceled)

1   Claim 11 (previously presented): The method according to Claim 1, further comprising the step

2   of creating, by the caller, a caller-specific profile prior to creating the voice mail message, wherein

3   the caller-specific profile indicates which sounds are to be selected as background sounds on

4   which days; and wherein the selecting step further comprises automatically processing the caller-

5   specific profile, responsive to the caller identifying the message segments, thereby causing the

6   sounds to be associated with the identified message segments to be automatically selected, based

7   on the day on which the voice mail message is created.

Claims 12 - 13 (canceled)

1   Claim 14 (previously presented): The method according to Claim 1, wherein the selected

2   background sounds are selected randomly from a plurality of available background sounds.

1   Claim 15 (previously presented): The method according to Claim 1, further comprising the step

2   of creating, by the caller, a caller-specific profile prior to creating the voice mail message; and

3   wherein the selecting step further comprises automatically processing the caller-specific profile,

4 responsive to the caller identifying the message segments, thereby causing the sounds to be

5 associated with the identified message segments to be automatically selected according to the

6 profile, without intervention by the caller.

Claim 16 (canceled)

1 Claim 17 (previously presented): The method according to Claim 1, wherein the selecting step

2 further comprises selecting each of the sounds, by the caller, from among a plurality of sounds

3 which are configured as non-updateable sounds selectable from the telephone device.

1 Claim 18 (previously presented): The method according to Claim 1, wherein the selected sounds

2 are selected from among a plurality of sounds that are available to, and offered to the caller by, an

3 apparatus on which the voice mail message is being recorded.

Claim 19 (canceled)

1 Claim 20 (previously presented): The method according to Claim 1, further comprising the step

2 of transmitting the selected background sounds from the telephone device to an apparatus on

3 which the voice mail message is being recorded.

1 Claim 21 (previously presented): The method according to Claim 20, wherein the selected

2 background sounds are compressed prior to the transmitting.

1　Claim 22 (previously presented): The method according to Claim 1, further comprising the step

2　of transmitting, for each of the selected sounds, an identifier thereof from the telephone device to

3　an apparatus on which the voice mail message is being recorded, for use by the apparatus to

4　obtain the played-back sounds.

1　Claim 23 (previously presented): The method according to Claim 1, further comprising the step

2　of transmitting, for each of the selected sounds, an address thereof from the telephone device to

3　an apparatus on which the voice mail message is being recorded, wherein the transmitted address

4　for each of the selected sounds is usable for locating a file to use as the played-back sound.

1　Claims 24 (previously presented): The method according to Claim 23, wherein at least one of the

2　transmitted addresses is a Uniform Resource Locator.

Claims 25 - 27 (canceled)

1　Claim 28 (previously presented): The method according to Claim 1, wherein the selecting step

2　further comprises the step of selecting at least one of the sounds using one of: a dual-tone multi-

3　frequency (DTMF) capability of the telephone device; a touch-sensitive display screen of the

4　telephone device; a key sequence operated using keys of the telephone device; or a voice

5　recognition capability provided by a voice messaging system which records the voice mail

6　message.

Claims 29 - 33 (canceled)

1 Claim 34 (currently amended): A method of enhancing voice mail messages for playback to a

2 listener, comprising steps of:

3   creating a voice mail message for the listener, by a caller using a telephone device;

4   identifying, by the caller using the telephone device while creating the voice mail message,

5 a plurality of message segments for segmenting the voice mail message;

6   selecting, by the caller using the telephone device, an audio file <u>from among a plurality of</u>

7 <u>available audio files</u> to insert into the voice mail message between one or more selected pairs of

8 successive ones of the message segments, such that the selected audio file is associated with the

9 selected pair(s) of message segments; and

10   inserting the selected audio file between the successive ones of the message segments in its

11 associated pair(s) as the voice mail message is played back to the listener.

Claims 35 - 36 (canceled)

1 Claim 37 (currently amended): The method according to Claim 34, wherein the <u>selected</u> audio

2 file is an audio signature associated with a speaker of the voice mail message.

Claims 38 - 89 (canceled)

Claim 90 (previously presented): The method according to Claim 20, wherein a telephone call placed by the caller for creating the voice mail message is transparently extended, without intervention of the caller, following the caller's completion of the voice mail message, and wherein the transmitting occurs during the transparent extension, after which the transparently-extended telephone call is automatically ended.

Claims 91 - 98 (canceled)

Claim 99 (previously presented): The method according to Claim 1, wherein the plurality of message segments are identified by the caller using the telephone device.

Claim 100 (previously presented): A system for enhancing a voice mail message for playback to a listener, comprising:

    means for creating the voice mail message for the listener, by a caller using a telephone device, the voice mail message comprising a plurality of message segments;

    means for identifying, by the caller using the telephone device, at least two of the message segments which are to have background sounds associated therewith;

    means for selecting, for each of the identified message segments by the caller using the telephone device, a sound to be associated therewith as the background sound, wherein the sounds selected as the background sound for at least two of the message segments are different sounds; and

    means for playing back, responsive to a request from the listener for playback of the voice

12   mail message, at least two of the identified message segments for which a sound was selected to

13   be associated therewith as the background sound, while concurrently playing back the sound

14   selected as the background sound for each of the played-backed identified message segments, and

15   wherein the sounds selected as the background sound for at least two of the played-back

16   identified message segments are different sounds, such that the background sound played back for

17   the voice mail message changes at least once during the playback.

1   Claim 101 (previously presented): The system according to Claim 100, wherein the plurality of

2   message segments are identified by the caller using the telephone device.

1   Claim 102 (previously presented): The system according to Claim 100, wherein the means for

2   selecting further comprises means for entering, by the caller using the telephone device, a caller-

3   specific personal identification value, and wherein the entering of the caller-specific personal

4   identification value causes the sounds to be associated with the identified message segments to be

5   automatically selected, without intervention by the caller.

1   Claim 103 (previously presented): The system according to Claim 100, further comprising means

2   for creating, by the caller, a caller-specific profile prior to creating the voice mail message,

3   wherein the caller-specific profile indicates which sounds are to be selected as background sounds

4   on which days; and wherein the means for selecting further comprises means for automatically

5   processing the caller-specific profile, responsive to the caller identifying the message segments,

6   thereby causing the sounds to be associated with the identified message segments to be

7   automatically selected, based on the day on which the voice mail message is created.

1   Claim 104 (previously presented): The system according to Claim 100, wherein the selected

2   background sounds are selected randomly from a plurality of available background sounds.

1   Claim 105 (previously presented): The system according to Claim 100, further comprising means

2   for creating, by the caller, a caller-specific profile prior to creating the voice mail message; and

3   wherein the means for selecting further comprises means for automatically processing the caller-

4   specific profile, responsive to the caller identifying the message segments, thereby causing the

5   sounds to be associated with the identified message segments to be automatically selected

6   according to the profile, without intervention by the caller.

1   Claim 106 (previously presented): The system according to Claim 100, wherein the means for

2   selecting further comprises means for selecting each of the sounds, by the caller, from among a

3   plurality of sounds which are configured as non-updateable sounds selectable from the telephone

4   device.

1   Claim 107 (previously presented): The system according to Claim 100, wherein the selected

2   sounds are selected from among a plurality of sounds that are available to, and offered to the

3   caller by, an apparatus on which the voice mail message is being recorded.

1   Claim 108 (previously presented): The system according to Claim 100, further comprising means

2   for transmitting the selected background sounds from the telephone device to an apparatus on

3   which the voice mail message is being recorded.

1   Claim 109 (previously presented): The system according to Claim 100, further comprising means

2   for transmitting, for each of the selected sounds, an identifier thereof from the telephone device to

3   an apparatus on which the voice mail message is being recorded, for use by the apparatus to

4   obtain the played-back sounds.

1   Claim 110 (previously presented): The system according to Claim 100, further comprising means

2   for transmitting, for each of the selected sounds, an address thereof from the telephone device to

3   an apparatus on which the voice mail message is being recorded, wherein the transmitted address

4   for each of the selected sounds is usable for locating a file to use as the played-back sound.

1   Claim 111 (previously presented): A computer program product for enhancing a voice mail

2   message for playback to a listener, the computer program product embodied on at least one

3   computer-usable medium and comprising:

4   computer-usable program code for enabling a caller to create the voice mail message for

5   the listener, using a telephone device, the voice mail message comprising a plurality of message

6   segments;

7   computer-usable program code for enabling the caller to identify, using the telephone

8   device, at least two of the message segments which are to have background sounds associated

9   therewith;

10   computer-usable program code for enabling the caller to select, for each of the identified

11   message segments by the caller using the telephone device, a sound to be associated therewith as

12   the background sound, wherein the sounds selected as the background sound for at least two of

13   the message segments are different sounds; and

14   computer-usable program code for playing back, responsive to a request from the listener

15   for playback of the voice mail message, at least two of the identified message segments for which

16   a sound was selected to be associated therewith as the background sound, while concurrently

17   playing back the sound selected as the background sound for each of the played-backed identified

18   message segments, and wherein the sounds selected as the background sound for at least two of

19   the played-back identified message segments are different sounds, such that the background sound

20   played back for the voice mail message changes at least once during the playback.

1   Claim 112 (previously presented): The computer program product according to Claim 111,

2   wherein the plurality of message segments are identified by the caller using the telephone device.

1   Claim 113 (previously presented): The computer program product according to Claim 111,

2   wherein the computer-usable program code for enabling the caller to select further comprises

3   computer-usable program code for enabling the caller to select at least one of the sounds using

4   one of: a dual-tone multi-frequency (DTMF) capability of the telephone device; a touch-sensitive

5   display screen of the telephone device; a key sequence operated using keys of the telephone

6   device; or a voice recognition capability provided by a voice messaging system which records the

7   voice mail message.

1   Claim 114 (currently amended): A system for enhancing voice mail messages for playback to a

2   listener, comprising:

3   means for creating a voice mail message for the listener, by a caller using a telephone

4   device;

5   means for identifying, by the caller using the telephone device while creating the voice

6   mail message, a plurality of message segments for segmenting the voice mail message;

7   means for selecting, by the caller using the telephone device, an audio file from among a

8   plurality of available audio files to insert into the voice mail message between one or more

9   selected pairs of successive ones of the message segments, such that the selected audio file is

10 associated with the selected pair(s) of message segments; and

11   means for inserting the selected audio file between the successive ones of the message

12 segments in its associated pair(s) as the voice mail message is played back to the listener.

1   Claim 115 (currently amended): The system according to Claim 114, wherein the selected audio

2   file is an audio signature associated with a speaker of the voice mail message.

1   Claim 116 (new): The method according to Claim 1, wherein the sound selected as the

2   background sound for at least two of the message segments are non-spoken sounds.